D. Willard Lyon

THE WORK OF THE L. M. S.

ON THE

NORTH CHINA PLAIN.

THE DAY OF OPPORTUNITY.

Prepared at the request of the Executive Committee of the North China District Committee of the L. M. S.

Tientsin Press, Ltd.

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"The Society is responsible for the evangelisation of 8,000,000 people on the North China Plain. The number of missionaries provided for the task is sixteen, that is, one missionary for 500,000 of the population! It may be that in time the staff here can be strengthened as the result of the consideration which we recommend should be given to the re-distribution of missionaries in China, but it is obvious that nothing that can be done in that way will be adequate for the needs of the North China Plain; more missionaries ought to be sent from home. It is a fruitful field of labour."

These words in the searching and notable Report of the L.M.S. Survey Committee (par. 118) have brought great encouragement to the missionaries on the North China Plain, and we are deeply grateful for the appreciation which they show of the needs of the work in that part of the mission field. We feel it is desirable to strengthen the appeal of the Report for more workers for this vast plain, and we wish, therefore, to set forth in some detail, and as vividly as possible, both the greatness of the need and the greatness of the opportunity which confront us in this work.

1. The Present Situation in North China.

In making this statement we propose to confine ourselves solely to the two distinctively 'country fields' of North China, namely, the adjacent districts of Tsangchow and Siaochang, which are alike in all essential respects and can conveniently be treated as one field.

a. *The Field.* The two stations in question comprise some 22 counties, with an area of about 14,000 square miles (about *twice* the size of Wales). The population is roughly estimated at 8,000,000, living in some 10,000 villages, of which about 500 have markets. The people are practically all farmers, living on a very narrow economic margin. The majority of the men, and practically all the women, are illiterate, and superstition and idolatry continue to abound everywhere. In many parts the people are still intensely conservative, and though the 'pigtail' has almost disappeared, footbinding is still very widely practised. Twenty years of republican government and national reforms have scarcely been able to break through the crust of old habits and touch the inner life and thought of the average villager.

b. *The Staff.* To evangelise this enormous area the present staff of missionaries and Chinese workers is, as the Report has clearly indicated, woefully inadequate. The actual figures are as follows:—

District workers	7
Bible School (Training work)	2
Medical	5
Educational	2
Total	16

The *total* number of missionaries for this whole area is 16, which, as the Survey points out, is an average of one missionary per 500,000 of the popula-

tion. It should be noted, however, that the *District workers*, that is, evangelistic missionaries who are able to itinerate out in the country field, number only seven, which may be raised to nine if two married women, who give full time to evangelistic work, are added; even so the proportion is roughly one missionary to every million of the population!

The Chinese evangelistic staff, which must necessarily do the bulk of the work, is also extremely small in comparison with the vast numbers of people to be reached. Altogether in the two districts there are only *32 preachers* and *11 Biblewomen*, and a few even of these are not available for district evangelistic work. Taking the total number who can be used for general evangelism as 40, the proportion of Chinese evangelists to population is about 1 to every 200,000!

c. *Work Accomplished.* It is perhaps not surprising that, with so small a staff of missionaries and Chinese evangelists, the results of our work hitherto should appear to be relatively meagre. Out of the 22 countries in the whole area scarcely 15 have yet been touched, and in many of these number of churches is very small. In all the 10,000 villages only about 150 churches have as yet been founded, and many of these are so weak as to be unable to exercise any influence on the life of their own communities It is true that in the last ten years there has been a steady development in the indigenous character of the churches and a marked improvement in the quality of the membership, for which we have largely to thank our new evangelistic policy and the widespread use of the phonetic script; yet it is also true that with so meagre a staff it has not been possible to lay very deep foundations in places already occupied, nor to advance as rapidly as we should like to take possession of untouched areas. It is clear, therefore, that only an insignificant fraction of the field can be said to have been brought under the power of the Gospel in the 50

or more years since it was first preached in this region.

2. The Present Opportunity and How to Meet it.

The greatness of the task and the smallness of the results so far do not, however, daunt us, and we face the future with unbounded hope and the expectation of a great harvest. And this for two reasons:—

(1). First, because we can say with Paul that "a great door and effectual is opened unto us"; and though there are "many adversaries" of a spiritual sort, there are no outstanding obstacles such as hinder the progress of the Gospel in many parts of the world. The whole area has been relatively free from banditry, and all its ten thousand villages are easily accessible. There is no caste system among the inhabitants, and no such tenacious devotion to old religions as is found, for example, in India; it is relatively easy to gain a hearing for the Gospel message, and relatively easy for those who believe to break away from ancestral beliefs and customs and accept the rule of Jesus Christ. While it would be wrong to say it was ever *easy* to convert men and plant churches, yet it is perfectly true that the door is wide open in North China today and it behoves us to enter in and take possession before the enemies of the faith break in from other sides.

(2). The second ground of hope lies in the evangelistic policy which we adopted more than fifteen years ago and which we have been tentatively testing and practising ever since. The essence of that policy is widespread evangelism, on the one hand, and self-support on the other; our purpose is to try and reach every part of the field and plant at least one living, self-supporting church in each market area in the shortest possible time. Suitable instruments such as the phonetic script, literature, etc., have already been

forged for this work, and after the apprenticeship of this past decade the method and lines of advance are gradually becoming much clearer than they were at first. We have come to feel that, *given an adequate staff, there is reasonable hope, within 30 or 40 years, of so establishing the Church in this field that it could effectively cope with the task of evangelising and Christianising the whole area.*

The doors being thus wide open and an effective policy being ready to hand, the question remains as to what constitutes a staff adequate for attaining the object which is set before us? One principle is clear: While the main emphasis of country work must necessarily be evangelistic, yet the largest success can only be gained by *all* branches of missionary activity working in harmony and definitely aiming at a common goal. This goal, as we have already said, will be the planting of living churches throughout the field in sufficient numbers that they may be able to carry the burden of evangelising all the villages and permeating the whole life of the people with the principles and spirit of Jesus Christ. Towards this end medical and educational work must aim, as well as the distinctively evangelistic arm, and reinforcements will accordingly be required in all these departments of activity.

a. *Evangelistic Staff.* In considering the great increase of evangelistic workers needed for this task, two principles must be kept in mind: First, that, though many more foreign missionaries are needed, the number of *Chinese* evangelists needed is still greater; and secondly, that a larger number of *women* workers, both foreign and Chinese, is needed than men workers. A few words of explanation will make these principles clear.

(i). The great burden of the evangelistic work must inevitably fall on the Chinese preachers and Biblewomen, and much of this work they alone can

do. The missionary is needed chiefly for planning, leading, inspiring, training and helping in many ways; but the bulk of the spade work in evangelism, for many reasons, can only be done by those who are 'Chinese of the Chinese.' For each division of the field (say, for each county) there should be a group of preachers and Biblewomen at work, while one foreign missionary would perhaps be sufficient. At present there are roughly five Chinese evangelists to each missionary, and for every increase of the missionary staff there should, if possible, be an increase of Chinese workers at the same ratio. This means, of course, that there will have to be an increase in the Native Agency grants to meet the support of the additional Chinese evangelists; but as the cost of maintaining even five Chinese is so much less than that of supporting one foreign missionary, and their work is every whit as necessary and important as the missionary's, this extra expenditure ought not to be grudged.

It may be urged that we should seek to rely on voluntary workers among the churches rather than to raise up a large body of paid evangelists. It is no doubt true that much of the evangelistic work in the churches most be done by the Christians themselves, and we are increasingly laying emphasis on the need for more voluntary work and for lay leadership in church life and activity; at the same time we feel that, while so much of our work is at the pioneer stage, and so many large areas are as yet unevangelised, while, in short, there are so few Christians to share in spreading the Christian message, a considerable number of paid agents is necessary in order that the foundations of the church may be well and truly laid.

(ii). At the present stage of the work it is also desirable that there should be more women workers, both Chinese and foreign, than men. The reasons for this are not far to seek. In the first place, the

number of women Christians is barely one third that of the men, and it is a fact that in every respect the women's work falls very far short of the standard attained in the work amongst the men in our churches. There are still many churches where there are no women church members at all, and very many where the number of women members is negligible. If our churches are to be strong and vigorous this defect must be remedied without delay; it is imperative that all the women in our churches should have equal opportunity with the men in order that they may become a real help to the churches and not merely nominal members. It has already been proved in a few cases that the women, given the opportunity, may become leaders in the churches, able to conduct their own meetings, carry on Sunday schools, and so on. But, on the other hand, generally speaking, women's work is peculiarly slow because of the illiteracy and the lack of mental training of the village women, so that to lead a group of women to an intelligent understanding of Christianity takes more time and effort than is needed to produce a like result among a group of men. Practically *every* woman has first to be taught to read the Bible and after that it is often a case of 'line upon line, precept upon precept', and slow careful instruction in Christian truth before the mind is opened to receive the wisdom which is necessary for salvation.

It is evident, therefore, that the most urgent need of all in this work is for a much larger staff of trained Biblewomen who can do the kind of spade work which has just been described. Unfortunately the task of securing a sufficient supply of good Biblewomen has proved a very difficult one, for until recently it has been impossible to use young unmarried women for this kind of work and it has been next to impossible to secure older women who are both intelligent enough to be trained and are free to leave their homes to

engage in itinerating work. The new conditions in China today are beginning to make it possible to use young women for village evangelism, but even so the problem is sufficiently complex, and it will be some time before it can be satisfactorily solved and an adequate staff of well equipped Biblewomen built up.

Such being the case there is an urgent need for a large increase in the number of women missionaries for evangelistic work. The need for these is a double one. In the first place, foreign women must, for the time being, do a great deal of the primary evangelistic work among the women in the villages, until there is formed a larger community of Christian women from which workers can be drawn. Secondly, on the women missionaries falls also the important duty of teaching and training church members, of finding, testing and training both voluntary workers in the churches and Biblewomen for wider evangelistic work. This twofold task which falls on the women missionaries, at the present stage, makes their burden peculiarly heavy and their position peculiarly important, and we feel justified in urging that even more evangelistic women than men should be sent out to the North China Plain, and that with the least possible delay. On the success of the women's work in these coming years, we may say without exaggeration, the successful planting of the church depends; so long as it falls so far short of the men's work, and the homes and the children remain largely uninfluenced, the church will be in a state of unstable equilibrium, and there is no guarantee that it will survive the present generation.

Keeping the above principles in mind, we have now to ask. What can be regarded as an *adequate* staff for this work? In other words, what force of workers will be sufficient to enable us to achieve our object in a reasonable length of time—say 30 to 40 years—in such a way that at the end of that time the

church will be securely planted and the bulk of mission funds and personnel may be transferred to other fields? It is difficult to answer such a question with any confidence, but we beg to suggest, in the first place, that *the total of District or itinerating missionaries should be raised to 20*, that is, one evangelistic missionary for every 400,000 of the population. The distribution of these should be approximately as follows: 7 men and 10 women for the permanent itinerating staff, together with 1 man and 2 women to provide for furloughs and emergencies. In addition to these the present staff for training preachers and Biblewomen, viz. 1 man and 1 woman, should be maintained, as the need for more evangelists will become more urgent, as, on the one hand, the foreign missionary staff increases, and, one the other hand, as the church develops and the evangelistic work expands to new areas.

In putting forward the above suggestions for a considerable number of additional missionaries, we wish to make it clear that we do not contemplate the expenditure of a big sum of money to enlarge the present central stations or to build more foreign buildings for the accomodation of new workers. A certain amount of capital expenditure is inevitable in any great new development of work, but it is our desire that it shall be kept down to an absolute minimum and that money shall be expended on the workers and the work rather than on property or material equipment. It is increasingly felt that to cope with the demands of our large field it is necessary to break away from, rather than concentrate in, the central stations, and that at least some of the missionaries should live out in the district, as near as possible to their actual work. This may mean establishing a number of temporary centres in different parts of the field, but the expense of such would not be great and it would also be possible to give them up as soon as

they had served their purpose. It must be our aim to preserve the highest degree of mobility consistent with a necessary minimum of stability and comfort.

It will not be needful here to go into details about the increase required in our Chinese evangelistic staff, corresponding to that in the missionary staff. It has been made sufficiently clear above that for every additional missionary several Chinese workers will be needed, whom it will be the business of the Training staff to prepare. For the support of such workers new grants will be required, most of which must, at the present pioneer stage, come from the Society; but it will be our aim, as the Chinese Church develops, to foster its sense of responsibility for this pioneer work and to encourage the Christians to contribute towards it according to their power.

b. *Medical Staff.* Medical work has from the beginning played an important part in the North China field, and the achievements of the Central Hospitals in Siaochang and Tsangchow are beyond praise. It is being increasingly felt, however, that the two Hospitals have not been as yet able to take their full share in evangelising the people of this plain, and that they ought to be able to help the work of church founding more directly and definitely than they are doing at present. In recent years, therefore, an ever growing emphasis has been placed on the need for *mobile medical work* and for a closer cooperation between the evangelistic and medical branches of the Mission.

This cooperation may take several forms, of which two are especially important:

(i) *Temporary or Field Hospitals.* These are Hospitals opened at any centre in the field where such work is especially desired, generally in conjunction with some evangelistic campaign. They last from a month to six weeks, and have in time past proved of great value, first, in reaching a great many sick people

who could not come to the central Hospital, and secondly, in establishing friendly relations and giving abundant opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel. The value of these Hospitals can indeed hardly be exaggerated.

The real need at present, however, is that this form of work should be regular and dependable, whenever the opportunities present themselves. The Central Hospital should be continually, not just occasionally, supplemented by Field Hospitals, and the evangelists should be able to count on this kind of help whenever they attack a new centre.

But to do this extensive medical work effectively an increase of staff is needed, especially an additional foreign doctor (in addition to the present three) who would not only do and organise this work himself, but also train helpers for these medico-evangelistic campaigns. It takes the full time of two doctors to manage the Central Hospitals, especially as these have now been registered as Training Schools for Nurses, and a third doctor is generally needed to supplement this work and to provide against furloughs. It is clear, therefore, that the wider work can only be done in any systematic way if a fourth doctor is availalble to develop this branch of activity.

(ii) *Child Welfare and Maternity Work.* This is a form of work which is becoming increasingly possible among the country women and which would be of immense value if it could be carried on in connection with our churches. It would open up new avenues of service for Christian women and give a splendid opportunity for entrance into the hearts and homes of the non-Christian women.

To organise such work and make it fruitful, however, is a whole time job in itself, and cannot be done by a foreign Nurse who has her hands more than full at the Central Hospital. It is necessary, there-

fore, that another Nurse should be added to the staff of each of the two stations, for the special purpose of developing this vitally important form of medical work.

In view, therefore, of the need for more mobile and extensive forms of medical work, and for closer co-operation between the medical and evangelistic branches, we confidently appeal for these reinforcements to our Hospital staffs, and funds wherewith to carry out the types of work indicated above.

c. *Educational Staff.* The outstanding facts about Educational work in China to-day are, first, that it is more and more being taken out of the hands of the Missionary Societies and taken over by the government; and secondly, that where it is still being carried on under the aegis of the Christian Church it is passing more and more into the hands of the Chinese. At first sight, therefore, it would seem as if there is no longer any need for the Missionary Societies to lay stress on Education or any part which a foreign educationalist can play in missionary work. Further the decision of the Chinese Educational Department to exclude religion from all Primary Schools, as far as possible, affects country educational mission work very greatly, and it appears that for some years educational missionaries in the country will not be able to make their contribution effective in the same way as before.

This, however, is to conceive the task of education too narrowly; for while it may be true that a foreigner can do less in educational *institutions* to-day than in previous days, there is still a wide and increasingly important field for educational work in connection with the churches in the villages, and the more widely the churches are planted throughout our district, the more urgent is the call for a special type of educational work which shall have as its

aim the upbuilding of the growing Christian community. It is becoming ever more clear that mobility and extension must be the keynote of education as well as of evangelism to-day, because educational work is an integral part of evangelism and has an important office to fill in relation to the founding of the indigenous church. And now that older avenues of service in the schools are being blocked up by the new conditions in China, the way is being opened up for other forms of work which in years past, owing to the heavy demands of the work in the Central schools, we have not been able to develop to any great extent.

There are two forms of Educational work which at the present are urgently needed and can be carried on without hindrance.

(i). *Adult Education.* This kind of work seeks to help the adult members of the Christian community, both men and women, by encouraging them to acquire the habit of reading, by increasing their range of knowledge, and by building them up in the Christian faith. Already much work of this kind has been done and its value is recognised by all. Thus an energetic attempt has been made to solve the problem of illiteracy by means of the phonetic script, books and pamphlets printed in the script, a monthly magazine in script and Chinese character alternately, etc. This work has all been greatly helped by the gift of a modern printing press. Again, a Lending Library with over 1,000 volumes has for seven years been circulating books and paper among workers, Christians and enquirers, and has been a valuable means of stimulating the reading habit. In 1930 a definite effort has been made by short-time schools to help towards mass education by the use of phonetic script as a means for teaching Chinese characters. Other forms of work and other kinds of literature are also being planned, and this branch of activity will con-

tinue to grow in importance as the Christian community grows.

In order to carry on such work for adults our country field needs two experienced missionaries, one in each station. This need is recognised by the China Council, and one Adult Educationalist has already been appointed to the work in Siaochang. It is hoped that the second worker, for Tsangchow, can be appointed without undue delay.

(ii). *Work for Girls.* The Survey Committee recognises (par. 34) that "the development of the education of girls.....is important", and we would urge that this is true, not only of the relatively few girls in our Mission schools, but of the large number of girls connected with our village churches, and also the considerable number of non-Christian girls in Government Schools. To-day there is an urgent need for work among these two classes of girls, and the woman educationalist can find abundant opportunity for service in this direction.

The actual work which the educational missionary would be able to do will, of course, be moulded by circumstances, and can only be indicated in general terms, but there are several lines of work which are clearly waiting to be taken up. Thus among the churches the most obvious and important work to be done is the development of Sunday Schools, which are very greatly needed throughout our field. There are also special activities like the Girls' Life Brigade, and classes of various kinds lasting for one or two months, which would include such courses as Phonetic Script, Introduction to learning Chinese Characters, singing, hygiene, care of babies, household management, etc. All of these would be definitely connected with the evangelistic side of the work and indeed would be centred in the local church. Again for non-Christian girls in Government schools much work might be done through visits, lectures on different

subjects, lantern talks, games, and Bible classes outside school hours. This field has hitherto been practically untouched, but we are convinced that with sympathy and perseverance much fruitful work could be accomplished among the girls in the schools scattered through the country field.

It is essential, therefore, that there should be one woman educationalist in each of the two stations, who should be largely set free from the work of the central schools—especially the work of teaching English—and become an itinerating missionary, working in closest conjunction with the evangelistic staff, whose task will be to bring Christ to the girls in the villages and schools and so help to win the future wives and mothers for Christ and the Church.

3. Summary of Needs.

The present Staff at work in the Tsangchow-Siaochang field has already been set forth in section 1.b. We now wish to set out clearly, in tabular form, a summary of the staff which, in the above Statement, we have spoken of as "adequate" for the evangelisation of the North China plain "within a reasonable length of time."

	Men.	*Women.*	*Total.*
District workers	8	12	20
Bible School Training Staff	1	1	2
Medical Staff	4	4	8
Educational Staff	2	2	4
	15	19	34

This means that the total staff should be more than doubled (34 instead of 16). This total, great as it seems, is still only sufficient to bring the ratio of missionaries to population up to 1 to about 240,000.

CONCLUSION.

In the above statement we have tried to set forth faithfully the needs of the North China Plain, the urgency of the call to evangelise this great field and the way in which the present opportunity can be met; and we send it out 'to all whom it may concern' in the hope that it will stimulate interest in the L.M.S., work in this part of China and lead some of the young people in our churches to give themselves to this service. "To be a missionary", as the Report rightly says, "is a 'man's job' ", and "young men and women cannot make a better investment of their lives than in such a service." (pars. 42 & 143). We do not believe that funds will be a difficulty if there are only men and women ready to give themselves to this work; and therefore our last word is not a plea for more money, but simply to say to our fellow Christians at home, "COME OVER AND HELP US."